

REMARKS

Reconsideration and the timely allowance of the pending claims, in view of the forgoing amendments and the following remarks, are respectfully requested.

Prior to this Amendment, claims 1-20 were pending. By the Amendment, claims 1-6 and 8-20 are amended. Claim 7 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Accordingly, after entry of this Amendment, claims 1-6 and 8-20 will remain pending.

I. Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. § 112

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-6, 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite. The Applicant amended claims 1-6, 13 and 14 to address the rejection. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection.

II. Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. § 102

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 7, 11, 12, 15, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Uno (US 5,535,127). The Applicant has canceled claim 7 and, thus, the rejection of claim 7 is moot. The Applicant amended claims 11 and 12 to depend on claim 4 and claims 15, 19 and 20 to depend on claim 14. Claims 4 and 14 are patentable over Uno because claims 4 and 14 recite features including, *inter alia*, a stamp detecting section which (i) discriminates at least one area seeming to be the stamp from another area based on the input image, and (ii) detects, as an area for the stamp, an area that includes two or more areas seeming to be the stamp along with said another area, if said another area is held between the two or more areas and has a size falling within a preset permissible range.

Uno discloses detecting postal indicia areas (Figs. 22 and 27, column 10, line 33 – column 12, line 9), but fails to disclose or suggest the above feature and, as a result, cannot anticipate claims 4 and 14. Claims 11, 12, 15 and 19 are allowable at least due to the dependency on claim 4 or 14. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection.

III. Claim Rejection – 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 9 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Uno in view of Wenzel (US 6,222,940). The Applicant amended claim 9 to depend on claim 4 and claim 17 to depend on claim 14. Claims 4 and 14 are patentable over Uno and Wenzel because, as discussed above, these claims recite the feature of a stamp detecting section which (i) discriminates at least one area seeming to be the stamp from another area based on the input image, and (ii) detects, as an area for the stamp, an area that includes two or more areas seeming to be the stamp along with said another area, if said another area is held between the two or more areas and has a size falling within a preset permissible range.

Moreover, Wenzel discloses a system and method for performing pattern matching to locate zero or more instances of a template image in a target image. Wenzel does not discuss detecting, as an area for the stamp, an area that includes two or more areas seeming to be the stamp and said another area, if said another area is held between the two or more areas and has a size falling within a preset permissible range. Neither Uno nor Wenzel discloses or suggests the above feature and, as a result, cannot be used either alone or in combination with one another to render claims 4 and 14 unpatentable. Claims 9 and 17 are allowable at least due to the dependency on claim 4 or 17. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejection.

IV. Claim Objection

In the Office Action, claims 8, 10, 16 and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. The Applicant has rewritten claims 8, 10, 16 and 18 in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Also, the Applicant has improved language of the claims to clarify the scope of protection. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the objection.

V. Conclusion

In view of the forgoing, the Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are patentable over the references applied against them. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw the rejections and objection of the claims and pass this application quickly to issue.

If there are any fees due in connection with the filing of this paper that are not otherwise accounted for, please charge our Deposit Account No. 03-3975 and refer to Order No. 008312/0283647.

Respectfully submitted,

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